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PROGRAM All Things Considered

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SUBJECT CIA and Honduras

LEE THORNTON: The report in today's New York Times that the CIA is heavily involved in Honduras was written by Philip Taubman. Taubman says the Central Intelligence Agency's operation in Latin America is its most ambitious in almost a decade. The operation, Taubman says, began early this year as a means of stopping the flow of arms to guerrillas in El Salvador and of bringing Nicaragua to the negotiating table.

PHILIP TAUBMAN: What's happened now is that over the past 12 months that plan seems to have expanded to include support now to paramilitary groups in the area whose aim is clearly to overthrow the government in Nicaragua. That wasn't initially what was contemplated by the Reagan Administration. But according to intelligence sources in Washington and Honduran officials in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, the United States, particularly the CIA, has been supplying assistance, through Argentina and other Latin nations, which has ended up going to paramilitary forces which have been based in Honduras and are trying to overthrow the government in Nicaragua.

THORNTON: How many agents, CIA agents, are there in Honduras?

TAUBMAN: There are at least 150. There are reports -- Time magazine reported earlier this week that there were 200.

THORNTON: How do we know all this? How do you know all this?

TAUBMAN: Well, it's actually somewhat unusual because covert operations, as you know, usually are supposed to be very secret. But this one started to leak out just about a year ago,